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Serial No. 09/904,061

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claim amendments and status:

1.   (Previously Presented) A method of allowing a United States-taxable player to participate in a reduced interruption gaming session when a jackpot over a threshold amount is won, the method utilizing a tracking device having a central server, and wherein the tracking device is connectable to one or more gaming machines, wherein the one or more gaming machines are bingo, keno, or slot machines, the method comprising:

collecting player-related information;

storing the player-related information;

allowing the player to participate in a reduced interruption gaming session;

recording jackpot-related information in the tracking device whenever a jackpot greater than a threshold amount is won;

enabling paying out winnings over the threshold amount via a hopper pay-out to the United States-taxable player immediately after the player wins credits over the threshold amount;

enabling the player to continue the reduced interruption gaming session, as desired;

terminating the reduced interruption gaming session; and

generating a statement referencing the recorded jackpot-related information and stored player-related information after the reduced interruption gaming session is terminated.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

enabling a pre-programmed gaming machine to play an uninterrupted session, even if a reportable jackpot is won.

3.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein enabling a pre-programmed gaming machine to play an uninterrupted session, even if a reportable jackpot is won, comprises:

inserting an agent card;

selecting uninterrupted play from a menu screen on a display; and

inserting a player card.

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4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein allowing the player to participate in a reduced interruption gaming session, comprises:

providing the player with physical access to a game of chance dedicated to uninterrupted play.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein collecting player-related information further comprises:

examining documents which qualify as proof of the player's identity.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein collecting player-related information further comprises:

obtaining tax related information about the player.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, wherein obtaining tax related information about the player further comprises:

accessing a document selected from the group consisting of the player's driver's license, the player's social security card, and the player's voter registration card.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the tax related information comprises the name, address, and tax identification number of the player.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising reporting jackpot-related information and player-related information to a taxing authority.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing the player with a statement referencing jackpot-related information after the player is done playing.

11. (Previously Presented) An interactive network linking at least one gaming machine and a central control unit for allowing reduced interruption game play, wherein the gaming machine is a bingo, keno, or slot machine, the network comprising:

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a central storage unit in electronic communication with the central control unit, wherein the central storage unit tracks and stores player-related information adequate for compliance with reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

at least one gaming machine is in communication with the central control unit, the at least one gaming machine is arranged to register a jackpot greater than a threshold amount is won, wherein the at least one gaming machine sends signals representing jackpot-related information to the central control unit, and the jackpot-related information is adequate for compliance with reporting requirements of a taxing authority,

wherein the interactive network enables paying out winnings over the threshold amount via a hopper pay-out to a United States-taxable player immediately after the player wins credits over the threshold amount;

wherein the central control unit automatically returns signals to the at least one gaming machine when jackpot-related information is recorded;

wherein the interactive network enables the player to continue the reduced interruption gaming session, as desired; and

a reporting unit in communication with the central control unit, wherein the reporting unit produces statements referencing player-related information and jackpot-related information, after the reduced interruption gaming session is terminated.

12.   (Original)   The network of claim 11, wherein the central control unit is a computer.

13.   (Original)   The network of claim 11, wherein the player-related information includes a name, an address, and a tax identification number of a player.

14.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 11, wherein the reporting unit comprises a printer for printing jackpot-related and player-related information on a form required by a taxing authority for jackpots over a threshold amount.

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15.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 11, wherein the at least one gaming machine includes a microprocessor programmed with a protocol for reduced interruption game play.

16.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 15, further comprising:

a networking computer connected to a plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit, the networking computer facilitating electronic communication between the plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit.

17.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 15, further comprising:

a player card encoder, wherein each of the at least one gaming machines is in electronic communication with a card reader capable of reading information encoded on a player card.

18.   (Original)   The network of claim 17, wherein the at least one gaming machine is in communication with a keypad.

19.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 18, wherein the protocol for reduced interruption game play is capable of being activated by an enabling event.

20.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 19, wherein the enabling event includes insertion of an agent card into the card reader, selection of reduced interruption play using the keypad, and insertion of a player card into the card reader.

21.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 20, wherein the protocol for reduced interruption game play is deactivated by removal of the player card from the card reader.

22.   (Original)   The network of claim 15, wherein physical access is limited to the at least one gaming machine.

23.   (Previously Presented) A tracking device utilizing a computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having a protocol stored thereon, wherein said protocol comprises machine readable code to enable a computer network to allow for a reduced

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interruption play session on a gaming machine to which the tracking device connects, even when a reportable jackpot is won, wherein the gaming machine is a bingo, keno, or slot machine, the machine readable code comprising:

    code to enable a central storage computer to store player-related information;

    code to enable a gaming machine to enter a reduced interruption play session in response to a user input;

    code to enable a gaming machine to send signals representing jackpot-related information to the central storage computer when a reportable jackpot is won;

    code to enable the central storage computer to receive and record jackpot-related information;

    code to enable paying out winnings over a threshold amount via a hopper pay-out to a United States-taxable player immediately after the player wins credits over the threshold amount;

    code to enable a gaming machine to communicate to the central storage computer that a reduced interruption session has ended;

    code to enable the player to continue the reduced interruption gaming session, as desired; and

    code to allow the central storage computer to generate a statement including player-related information and jackpot-related information after a reduced interruption session has ended.

    24.   (Previously Presented) A method of allowing a United States-taxable player to participate in a reduced interruption session on a gaming machine, the method utilizing a tracking device having a central computer and wherein the tracking device is configured to be in electronic communication with the gaming machine, even when a reportable jackpot is won, wherein the gaming machine is a bingo, keno, or slot machine, the method comprising:

    collecting player-related information;

    storing the player-related information in an electronic medium such that it can be accessed by the central computer;

    allowing the player to play in a reduced interruption session on the gaming machine;

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sending signals representing jackpot-related information from the gaming machine to an electronic storage device when a reportable jackpot is won;

recording the jackpot-related information in an electronic medium using the tracking device such that the information is accessible by the central computer;

enabling paying out winnings over a threshold amount via a hopper pay-out to the United States-taxable player immediately after the player wins credits over the threshold amount;

enabling the player to continue the reduced interruption session, as desired;

accessing the player-related information and jackpot-related information when the player is done playing; and

generating a statement referencing jackpot-related information and player-related information after the reduced interruption session is terminated, the statement being in a form complying with tax regulations.

25.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, further comprising:

returning signals from the central computer to the gaming machine after the jackpot-related information has been recorded, the returned signals causing the gaming machine to unlock.

26.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein allowing the player to play in a reduced interruption session on the gaming machine comprises:

providing the player with a player card encoded with at least one piece of player-related information;

inserting an agent card into a card reader in communication with the gaming machine;

entering enabling information into a keypad in communication with the gaming machine;

removing the agent card from the card reader;

introducing the player card into the card reader;

sending enabling information from the gaming machine to the central computer;

receiving a return signal from the central computer confirming authorization to participate in uninterrupted play; and

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beginning an uninterrupted session on the gaming machine.

27.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein allowing the player to play in a reduced interruption session on the gaming machine further comprises:

providing physical access to a gaming machine dedicated to reduced interruption game play.

28.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the statement comprises IRS Form W2-G.

29.   (Previously Presented) A method of allowing reduced interruption gaming, the method utilizing a tracking device having a central computer that is configured to be connected to a gaming machine, wherein the gaming machine is a bingo, keno, or slot machine, the method comprising:

collecting player-related information adequate to satisfy the reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

storing the player-related information;

allowing a United States-taxable player to participate in a reduced interruption gaming session;

receiving electronic signals representing jackpot-related information from the gaming machine at the central computer when a jackpot greater than a threshold amount is won, the jackpot-related information being adequate to satisfy the reporting requirements of the taxing authority;

recording the jackpot-related information when electronic signals representing the jackpot-related information are received from the gaming machine at the central computer;

returning signals from the central computer to the gaming machine when jackpot-related information has been recorded;

enabling paying out winnings over a threshold amount via a hopper pay-out to the United States-taxable player immediately after the player wins credits over the threshold amount;

enabling the player to continue the reduced interruption gaming session, as desired; and

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generating a statement referencing the recorded jackpot-related information and stored player-related information after the reduced interruption gaming session is terminated.

30.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein collecting player-related information adequate to satisfy the reporting requirements of a taxing authority further comprises:

accessing a document selected from the group consisting of the player's driver's license, the player's social security card, and the player's voter registration card.

31.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:
reporting jackpot-related information and player-related information to a taxing authority.

32.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, further comprising:
providing the player with a statement referencing jackpot-related information after the player is done participating.

33.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein allowing the player to participate in a reduced interruption gaming session comprises:
enabling a pre-programmed gaming machine to execute a protocol putting the gaming machine in to uninterrupted mode.

34.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 33, wherein enabling a pre-programmed gaming machine to execute a protocol putting the gaming machine in to uninterrupted mode comprises:
inserting an agent card;
selecting uninterrupted play from a menu screen on a display; and
inserting a player card.

35.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 29, wherein allowing the player to participate in a reduced interruption gaming session further comprises:

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providing the player with physical access to a game of chance dedicated to reduced
interruption play.

36.   (Previously Presented) An interactive network linking at least one gaming machine
and a central control unit for allowing reduced interruption play, wherein the gaming machine is
a bingo, keno, or slot machine, the network comprising:

a central storage unit in electronic communication with the central control unit, wherein
the central storage unit tracks and stores player-related information adequate for compliance with
reporting requirements of a taxing authority;

wherein the at least one gaming machine is in communication with the central control
unit, the at least one gaming machine is arranged to interrupt play only whenever a stop signal is
received from the central control unit or an error occurs, the at least one gaming machine sends
signals representing jackpot-related information to the central control unit whenever a reportable
jackpot is won, and the jackpot-related information is adequate for compliance with reporting
requirements of a taxing authority;

wherein the interactive network enables paying out winnings over a threshold amount via
a hopper pay-out to a United States-taxable player immediately after the player wins credits over
the threshold amount;

wherein the interactive network enables the player to continue the reduced interruption
play, as desired;

wherein the central control unit automatically returns stop signals to the at least one
gaming machine if a write error occurs when jackpot-related information is recorded, the
returned stop signals causing the at least one gaming machine to interrupt play; and

a reporting unit in communication with the central control unit, wherein the reporting unit
produces statements referencing player-related information and jackpot-related information, after
the reduced interruption gaming session is terminated.

37.   (Original)   The network of claim 36, wherein the central control unit is a
computer.

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38.   (Original)   The network of claim 36, wherein the player-related information includes a name, an address, and a tax identification number of a player.

39.   (Original)   The network of claim 36, wherein the reporting unit comprises a printer for printing jackpot-related and player-related information in a form required by a taxing authority.

40.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 36, wherein the at least one gaming machine includes a microprocessor programmed with a protocol for reduced interruption play.

41.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 40, further comprising:

a networking computer connected to a plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit, the networking computer facilitating electronic communication between the plurality of gaming machines and the central control unit.

42.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 40, further comprising:

a player card encoder, wherein each of the at least one gaming machines is in electronic communication with a card reader capable of reading information encoded on a player card.

43.   (Original)   The network of claim 42, wherein the at least one gaming machine is in communication with a keypad.

44.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 43, wherein the protocol for reduced interruption play is capable of being activated by an enabling event.

45.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 44, wherein the enabling event includes insertion of an agent card into the card reader, selection of reduced interruption play using the keypad, and insertion of a player card into the card reader.

46.   (Previously Presented) The network of claim 45 wherein the protocol for reduced interruption play is deactivated by removal of the player card from the card reader.

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47.   (Original)   The network of claim 40, wherein physical access is limited to the at least one gaming machine.

48.   (Canceled)

49.   (Canceled)

50.   (Canceled)

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